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**Public Hearing Testimony**  
**H.B. 5142 and 5259**

**For the Consideration of This Committee:**

My name is Maryann Lombardi and I am a member of the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities a Governor appointed body of persons with disabilities, parents of children with developmental disabilities and agency representatives that serve people with developmental disabilities. We receive federal funding from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities to implement the Developmental Disabilities Act and to that end we promote the full inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community living with Council directed staff activities or grants.

I would like to thank the committee for this opportunity to comment on the broad and sweeping language the proposed legislation in House Bills 5142 and 5259. When I first read the bills these were the questions that entered my mind:

1. How is a group home being defined in the law?
2. Will the public hearing law apply to homes for children as well as adults?
3. Will this public hearing law apply to temporary residences as well as permanent community homes? And will it apply across the board and without regard for children and adults with developmental disabilities, mental illness, with DCF and juvenile justice involvement and others?
4. Will this public hearing law apply both to private citizens and non-profits as well as public agencies?
5. How will this law co-exist and comply with state and federal laws such as: **HIPAA, Civil Rights Act, Americans with Disabilities Act, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Equal Protection Clause of the United States Constitution, and the Connecticut Fair Housing Laws (Conn. Gen. Stat. ss 46a-64c).**

6. If such a law prevents children and adults from finding residence in the State of Connecticut, where will they go? Will they be forced to leave CT, taking with them the jobs which provide the assistance they require for community living?

### **My Son Gianni**

My son Gianni is almost 20 years old. He is a young man diagnosed with Autism, Developmental Apraxia leaving him without the ability to speak he has severe motor planning issues and progressive scoliosis. In June of 2012 Gianni will graduate from the residential school he now attends to come back to his community. He will need a place to live.

My husband and I are small business owners who have worked hard all our lives. We recently purchased a small house in our community we are renovating for Gianni and whoever Gianni's future housemate will be. When I met with transition coordinators with the Department of Developmental Services they were very excited about this endeavor and told me that they intend to use our house as a model in recruiting other families to follow suit in planning for their children's future needs. Many families throughout the state have taken this responsibility into their own hands. In our area we have several group homes opened by families working together with Interfaith Ministries in New Canaan and Darien, as well as "Sunrise Cottage" in Ridgefield opened by a group of parents for their young adult children.

Depending on how your proposed law is defined and framed I sincerely doubt that either my family or any other family facing the reality of public scrutiny of their private affairs would be willing to subject themselves and their children to such an onerous ordeal as a public hearing as a contingency of having a place to live in their community. Our family believes that the unintended consequences contained in this bill far outweigh any possible benefit.

Imagine for a moment you are the parent of a child with a developmental disability. You have loved and nurtured your child from birth. From the time your child is three years old you have fought battle after battle to provide the therapy, education and assistance the laws requires they have. You have fought battles with insurance companies, the medical community and your school system.

Finally you arrive at age 21 and your child graduates into adult community life. And in order for them to find a place to live independently in their community they must first submit themselves to a public hearing!

I can't imagine anything more discriminatory in nature and out of compliance with the spirit and the letter of already existing laws which protect children and adults with both physical and mental impairments than this proposal! Quite frankly not even convicted criminals, sex offenders or pedophiles are required a public hearing to reintegrate and participate in community living.

As quoted from Thomas Jefferson on Representative Sampson's facebook page "The course of history shows that as a government grows liberty decreases." The inherent truth of this statement is manifest by bills 5142 and 5259. People with developmental disabilities are endowed by their creator with the same unalienable rights as citizens without developmental disabilities and must have the opportunity to live in their respective communities without the onerous obligation of a public hearing to be able to do so.